

Evangelicalism and Political Economy (the 1800s): Friends Partially Reengage with the Social Order

A chapter from the book *Quakers and Capitalism*
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The Evangelical Transition

In my schematic history of *Quakers and Capitalism*, I have divided Quaker economic history into three major periods defined by the ways that Friends engaged with the world around them. These major historical periods were separated by major periods of transition, in which external forces and internal forces collided to produce a new Quaker alignment. In the first transition period, brought on by the persecutions in England in the last decades of the 17th century, the external pressures of persecution and the internal imposition of gospel order closed a period of intense apocalyptic engagement with the world and opened a period of cultural dualism, in which Friends withdrew from the world socially, politically and religiously, but channeled incredible energy outward into the world of business, commerce and finance.

Over the course of the 18th century, Friends played key roles in creating modern capitalism and the industrial revolution in England and they continued to build the new economy throughout the 19th century. The turn of the 20th century brought a second major transition, in which the rise of corporate capitalism, liberal thought and new persecutions during the First World War collided with a liberalizing movement within Quakerism. The result was a decisive turn outward, away from quietist withdrawal and into much more vigorous and creative engagement with the world and its problems, including the social and political consequences of capitalism's continued expansion and evolution.

Right in the middle of the double-culture period, however, around 1800, Friends went through a minor period of transition brought on by the rise into cultural prominence of evangelicalism. Evangelicalism opened a door in the wall that Friends had built around themselves and allowed them to reengage with the world in certain ways without giving up their distinctive and even insular culture. More importantly with respect to a study of Quakers and capitalism, the new evangelicalism emerged and co-evolved with the new 'science' of economics, though the term 'economics' only came into use a hundred years later. Then it was called 'political economy,' and focused on the ways that production and consumption were organized in nation states. The first political economists, including its putative

'father,' Adam Smith (1723-1790), held chairs in moral philosophy. The first professor of political economy in England was Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), taking this position in 1805.

Malthus (of 'Malthusian theory' fame) was an evangelical minister. Like other evangelical political economists of the time, Malthus's moral theology shaped his economic theory and this combination gave rise to a second major school of economic thinking that stood in some opposition to the 'classical' school first defined by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* (published in 1776). Together, these two schools shaped the issues and discourse that defined early modern economic thinking and this dynamic dialog found embodiment in two extraordinary men: Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. Malthus and Ricardo were friends but friendly rivals intellectually, and their publishing duel helped define the field of political economy as it matured.

Ricardo was the second great classical economist, after Adam Smith. He was born Jewish and had emigrated to England with his family from Holland. But then he eloped with a Quaker, Priscilla Anne Wilkinson, and his family disowned him. He made a fortune in the stock market and 'retired' to write at the age of 43. He converted to Unitarianism.

(One of these days, I plan to research Ricardo more thoroughly, hoping to clarify his relationship with his wife's family and her meeting and with Quakerism in general. Was she herself disowned for marrying out of meeting? Why did he become a Unitarian instead of a Quaker? What affect, if any, did his new religious identity and his exposure to Quakerism have on his economic thinking? If political economy was, in that time, essentially moral philosophy, and if theology was shaping the work of his primary intellectual correspondent, and he himself had undergone some kind of religious transformation, how could these factors not have helped to inform his own ideas?)

No Friends, evangelical or otherwise, contributed significantly to this new discipline of political economy until the second major transition around 1900, and evangelicalism did not alter substantially the momentum or direction of Quaker wealth-building. But it did help to shape the way that Friends approached poverty and other negative consequences of capitalist expansion during the 19th century. And Joseph John Gurney, the great evangelical Friend of his time, was a close associate and a deep admirer of one of the preeminent evangelical political economists of the age, Thomas Chalmers (1740-1847).

Evangelical political economy dominated economic policy and politics throughout the first half of the 19th century. Later in this chapter, I will

- ✧ talk about Chalmers and explore his relationship with Gurney as a window into how evangelical thought helped to shape social and political responses to the structural violence of capitalism;

- ✧ look at how evangelical Quakerism adopted and adapted this moral philosophy;
- ✧ examine the rise and fall and periodic resurgence of evangelical political economy and the role of some Friends in that history; and
- ✧ look briefly at the different course that these issues took in America, where Friends had always been more diverse, not just theologically, but also in terms of social class, social and political geography, economic development, and relative influence over public social and economic policy.

Evangelical Political Economy — How evangelicalism shaped 19th century Quaker economics and social policy

In 1825, Great Britain entered an economic depression comparable in severity to the crash of 1929 in America. Hundreds of firms went bankrupt and the Bank of England itself came close. The collapse came out of the blue. Malthus had predicted cyclical economic collapses as part of what has become known as ‘Malthusian theory’ in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, first published in 1796 and revised through 1826 in five subsequent editions. But no one had seen this depression coming. Theories about its causes and ideas for its cure buzzed in the parlors of the business and intellectual elites of Britain and occupied the journalists and pamphleteers of the time.

In his journal, Joseph John Gurney recorded “feeling the Lord to be near to us” during that time. (Descended from Hugh de Gournay, one of the Norman noblemen who came to England with William the Conqueror, Gurney’s family had started with huge land grants from William in Norwich and Suffolk. They founded the Bank of Norwich in 1770, which was for a time the second largest bank in England after the Bank of England. Around 1809, the family bought a large bill brokering business, a firm that lends money or finds lenders for borrowers; for forty years, Overend, Gurney and Company was the largest broker of loans in the world. In 1896, Gurney’s Bank merged with Backhouse’s Bank and Barclays Bank of London and several other Quaker provincial banks to form what is now Barclays Bank.)

The two schools of political economy current at the time—classical and evangelical—approached these cyclical downturns differently, in terms of how they analyzed their causes, how they proposed to manage the system in times of crisis, and how they treated those who suffered from their fallout. In 1825, evangelical thinkers dominated this economic discourse.

Gurney himself believed, along with his evangelical peers, in a providential God who watched human events and sometimes intervened according to a divine plan. Like them, mindful of judgment, he watched out for temptation and hoped for atonement. The financial crisis of 1825-26 was surely a moral test; but mostly it was seen as a judgment against those who had already surrendered to avarice and

ambition. Gurney no doubt experienced God's nearness in the searing heat of financial losses, which naturally turned him inward to reflect on his own moral character and standing with his Judge. Then, when his fortune ultimately survived, came the cool refreshing draught of escape from ruin and at least partial reassurance of his moral uprightness. His fortune was saved; he was saved. Many of his fellow capitalists were not.

For moderate evangelicals like Gurney, God's providence was systemic: both nature and markets ran according to God's plan for the world's government and for human judgment, but not every little event was an act of specific divine intervention. Adam Smith's famous "invisible hand"—the natural tendency of markets to efficiently set prices on their own, without government interference—for evangelical political economists, this mysterious and quasi-miraculous attribute of free markets was actually the invisible hand of God at work. The fact that the actions of individuals powered the mechanisms of the market and gave it direction made the system an inherently moral one—human behavior, including especially, moral behavior, drove market behavior. Market policy therefore required a moral philosophy and this evangelical philosophy required not only that you leave God's mechanisms alone but also that you leave individuals to choose their actions and suffer their judgment.

Such a moral philosophy naturally encouraged moral speculation as much as it discouraged financial speculation, especially when bad things happened: cholera epidemics and market downturns pointed toward sins as causes, so the evangelical economists would search for the culprit sins behind these events. As the system tended to be general in its chastising effects, hurting lots of people and society in general, so the more moderate evangelical political economists tended to be somewhat general in their attributions of moral cause and they tended to differ when they got down to specifics.

More radical evangelicals believed, however, that God micro-managed the system, intervening directly and with specific purpose in virtually all events. Thus, they saw every outbreak of cholera or market downturn as a deliberate visitation for some specific sin(s) and this emboldened them to get serious and specific with their condemnations and exhortations.

All evangelical political economists agreed, though, that, squirming under God's plan, and always defying its purposes, lurked human sin. Every human problem had its ultimate root in sin. Social ills, like poverty and economic recessions, personal problems, like poverty and bankruptcy—you could trace them all back to sin, not just sinfulness in general, but often a particular act, trait or policy. Sin and its consequences for the immortal soul gave evangelical political economists a sense of emotional urgency that heated the discourse up far more than the rational theories of the classical economists.

The sins behind economic downturns were clear: greed, primarily, ambition, and pride. Bull markets encouraged borrowing and speculation. Encouraged by their

winnings, investors got overextended. Then, when everyone realizes that they are sitting on a bubble, panic ensues, people start calling in their notes, and the system collapses. Chastised for a time, businessmen (sic) recommit themselves to prudence. But then they forget the pain, greed plants its seeds again, and the cycle starts over.

The sins behind poverty were also clear: improvidence and licentious habits—laziness, gambling, drinking, wantonness of all kinds—and, of course, sex. Sex led to overpopulation among the working classes, which led to poverty.

For these evangelical political economists, the cure for both poverty and what we now call the business cycle was moral tuition. The cure for economic depressions was collective repentance and a nation that hewed more closely to God's law. The cure for poverty was personal repentance and strengthened moral character. The evangelical worldview rejected most practical approaches to poverty relief and turned instead to moral paternalism. Poor relief was actually cruel in its consequences because it encouraged idleness, and, anyway, the cruelty of economic suffering was actually salutary, because it led to repentance. Far better to suppress vice and encourage industry, economy and discipline than to prop up the bad habits of the poor with a dole. The material charity of evangelical social policy thus tended toward things like good clothing that could support self-respect, rather than grants of money. And, of course, Bibles, plus enough education to enable the poor to read their Bibles. One thinks immediately of Elizabeth Fry, Gurney's sister, ministering to the inmates of Newgate Prison.

As I've said, Friends produced no political economists of note in this period, but one Friend—Joseph John Gurney, 1788-1847—offers us a valuable window into the distinctive evangelical mutation in the Quaker double culture of religious withdrawal and economic engagement. In his life and especially, in his friendship with Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), one of the leading evangelical political economists of the age, we see how the evangelical movement drew Friends back into the world of social and political action in some ways, encouraging some innovations in Quaker economic 'practice' and loosening the rigid dualism of the double-culture period without completely undoing its approach and withdrawal regarding the wider social order.

Friends and evangelical political economy—portrait of a friendship: Thomas Chalmers and Joseph John Gurney

England has had three legal systems for taking care of the poor since Queen Elizabeth I reformed the punitive Tudor system, which was breaking down in the face of the decline of monasticism and the wider medieval social structure. Her reforms (1597 and 1601) created a national poor law system for England and Wales that used the parish as the administrative structure and supplied funds through a compulsory land tax levied at the parish level. It put people who couldn't work into poorhouses, subsidized the labor of the able-bodied poor, put vagrants in a House of

Correction, and arranged apprenticeships for pauper children. The British colonists brought this system with them to North America.

The assessment system, as it was called, began to break down itself in the face of industrialization, which drew large numbers of rural poor into the cities to work in the new factories, straining the urban parishes with both heavy taxes and overwhelming responsibilities. By the time of the depression of 1825, which I mentioned, the assessment system was ramping up to meet the growing demand and spreading on the heels of increased poverty to areas like Scotland, while its shortcomings were becoming more and more unacceptable. By this time, Thomas Malthus had published six editions of his landmark work *An Essay on the Principle of Population* and David Ricardo, the classical economist, had published his hugely influential *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* in 1817, having been inspired to enter the field after reading Malthus.

The debate about how to care for the poor and reduce or eliminate poverty was on. Pressure was mounting to act and the nation was becoming ready to embrace radical reform. Many looked to greater state intervention because local resources were so inadequate, and many agreed that a national system was required to help smooth out the vagaries of local organization. Evangelical political economists like Malthus resisted this trend, however, believing that aid to the poor only encouraged the very sins that had made them poor in the first place—laziness, vices like gambling and drink, and sex—having more kids than they could support. They also felt that mandatory taxes and a state-sponsored distribution system undermined the moral character and opportunities of the rich. They insisted that the spiritual needs of the giver—that is, themselves—were at least as important as those of the receivers—the poor. Each act of charity, to be a genuine act of conscience, had to be voluntary, spontaneous and discriminating. You had to be involved for benefit to accrue. The real obligation was to God, not to the poor. Institutionalizing charity with a system based on mandatory taxation denied the rich the blessing they might receive from caring for the poor and denied the poor the opportunity for the kind of personal contact with the righteous that could ignite a conversion.

Into this exciting environment came the Reverend Thomas Chalmers, a brilliant, charismatic, innovative and energetic man who'd become a zealous evangelical after a personal conversion experience. Of his character, the *Wikipedia* entry says this: "He was transparent in character, chivalrous, kindly, firm, eloquent and sagacious; his purity of motive and unselfishness commanded absolute confidence; he had originality and initiative in dealing with new and difficult circumstances, and great aptitude for business details."

Like Malthus and his other evangelical peers, Chalmers believed that poverty resulted from flawed moral character and that private voluntary charity was the solution. Already famous in Great Britain for his theological writings, he solidified his reputation as a political economist by testing his ideas in the field in what amounted to an early 19th century faith-based initiative. When the Scotsman took

over the very poor parish of St. John in Glasgow in 1819, the British system of compulsory tax assessment for the poor was gaining ground in Scotland. Chalmers believed that this approach actually made things worse and proposed a voluntary approach involving radically reorganizing the parish and applying a rigorous program of family visitation, counseling and monitoring to enforce moral rectitude. In four years, he reduced annual pauper relief in the parish from £1,400 to £280. The astounding success of his program greatly impressed the rest of the political and political economic elites, especially when they looked at the numbers rather than the huge organizational effort involved. Chalmers himself burned out from the work load and, in 1823, having 'made the numbers,' left his extremely demanding life running this operation and accepted a chair in moral philosophy at St. Andrews. This was the seventh academic offer made to him in his eight years in Glasgow. His lectures and writings influenced political economic thinking and policy for the next 25 years and beyond.

Where do Friends fit in all this? So far, my researches have found little to indicate specifically what Quakers, and especially, evangelical Quakers, thought of evangelical political economy. It seems that Friends shared their moral-economic worldview to a large extent, but not its harshness of tone or cold-heartedness in practice. Wealthy Friends were morally paternalistic themselves and they shared with these evangelical thinkers a commitment to personal and spontaneous giving. And I know that Chalmers became friends with the Gurneys and other Quakers, whom he called "the most serviceable philanthropists we met with." [*The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*, Boyd Hilton, p. 59. This book is the source of much of my thinking in this area and is a great resource.] Gurney and his sister Elizabeth Fry accompanied Chalmers when he testified before a Select Committee on the State of the Poor in Ireland in 1830, presumably because they shared his views. Evangelical Friends also shared these men's extreme nervousness about their own spiritual health and the moral dangers of wealth. J.J. Gurney claimed that the most "salutary chastisements" he had received from God had "arisen out of being . . . a 'monied man,'" [Hilton, p. 116 n.3, quoting Gurney's journal] and, as I said earlier in this chapter, he reported "feeling the Lord to be near to us" during the severe economic crisis of 1825, expressing the belief that market collapses could be times of visitation.

The clearest evidence that Chalmers and his ideological brethren spoke to the evangelical Quaker condition that I have found is a book published in 1853 by Joseph John Gurney titled *Chalmeriana, or, Colloquies with Dr. Chalmers*. Gurney speaks very glowingly of Chalmers in this little book, praising his modesty and religious humility, the earnestness of his faith, his stellar character as a man, the effectiveness of his poverty program, and, especially, the intellectual power and moral force of his extraordinary mind. They clearly had a deep regard for each other.

I think it's fair to say that at least they were on the same wavelength, sharing the essentials of evangelical faith and its general implications for economic practice. And I don't think it goes too far to say that Gurney represents in large degree his evangelical Quaker peers in these matters.

One crucial area of difference does peek through, however. Chalmers is preoccupied with judgment and with justice as the primary attribute of God, and he was a self-avowed predeterminist; by contrast, Gurney gives equal weight to God's *goodness*. Chalmers looks at the cross and the Atonement and sees God's judgment.. Gurney sees a divine gift of love. In one section of the book, the two men are discussing the work of several other writers on the moral attributes of God. Chalmers is warning against reducing God's character to the single quality of benevolence when *justice* (that is, judgment) is (to Chalmers) obviously more important. Gurney, though, argues: "Surely, *that* [the atonement of Christ; emphasis is Gurney's] is where justice and benevolence meet; where God has displayed at once his abhorrence of sin and his mercy to the sinner." In the dialog Gurney records, Chalmers veers away from Gurney's point without responding to it.

To generalize: though acutely conscious of sin and of the sinner's desperate need for Atonement, evangelical Friends remained more optimistic, more open to God's goodness. Precisely in the Atonement did they see God's goodness most clearly demonstrated. This, I think, made evangelical Friends much less willing to leave people in their suffering as the necessary road to contrition and conversion, and made them much more willing to minister to sufferers instead. The work of Elizabeth Fry, J. J. Gurney's sister, is instructive here. Once awakened from her life as a rich, unreligious, even frivolous (in her own eyes) ingénue, she ends up in the Newgate prison wards trying to help real people. Her tools are the classic evangelical ones: literacy, moral exhortation and the Bible. But her hands are dirty and her heart is burning with care.

Non-evangelical Friends, on the other hand, in their quietist passivity, had not the motivation of the missionary to get them into the world with the same fervor. Their inwardness tended to keep them out of philanthropy and movements for social reform. At the other extreme, super-evangelicals, especially leaders in America of the pre-millennialist holiness movement that emerged in the 1870s and '80s from the evangelical awakening of mid-century, these Friends saw relief work as the devil's work and abandoned the poor to the wrath of God's judgment. According to Professor Hamm in *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, this point of view was quite influential among American evangelical leaders for quite some time, though Friends in the benches tended to be more moderate in their theology and compassionate in their views.

Evangelical political economics dominated discourse and policy in England into the middle of the 19th century. By then, several factors had begun to erode its influence over policy, with the horrible Irish famine as a crucial turning point. We will turn to this history next. But the moral philosophy of evangelical political

economic thinking has never disappeared and has periodically regained the allegiance of some politicians in America, as we well know. In the hands of Herbert Hoover (a Quaker), Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, this moral economic philosophy has played a major role in American public policy.

The Decline of Evangelical Political Economy

In 1832 and 1834, the debate in Britain over how to deal with industrial urban poverty took a decisive turn in the New Poor Law, whose policies and ethos dominated Victorian poor relief for the rest of the century. The New Poor Law denied any able-bodied person money or help unless they lived in a workhouse and worked. It mandated that workhouses be built in every parish and living conditions were deliberately designed to be worse than conditions outside the workhouse in order to discourage people from seeking aid. Eligibility requirements were set very high.

The laws were a decisive triumph for evangelical political economy, codifying the mostly predetermined conclusions of the Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws 1832, two of whose four members were staunchly evangelical (Bishop John Bird Sumner and its economist, Nassau William Senior). They reflected a weird convergence of Thomas Malthus's population theory and evangelical moral philosophy, David Ricardo's classical economic theory of wages, and Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism. Sumner saw Malthus's theory of geometric population growth and its threat to national security as part of the Divine Plan and agreed that, by removing some of the poor's suffering, the old assessment system tended to remove the incentive for moral improvement. The law therefore embraced suffering as a deterrent to the moral vices believed to cause poverty and as an incentive to repentance. It also embraced Bentham's utilitarian faith in the free market system to provide the "greatest good for the greatest number," in terms of wages, and also his assumption that people choose pleasant options over unpleasant ones, and would therefore choose to work rather than to live in the workhouse, if conditions in workhouses were bad enough.

Around mid-century, however, evangelical thinking began to lose its hold on the discipline of political economy and on the distinctive middle class piety that it had fostered in British society, though it remained a dominant force in Quakerism (both British and American), especially among the Society's leadership, until almost the end of the century. Failures on several fronts caused evangelical influence on economics to decline:

- ✧ As economic theory, it failed to keep up with the more effective tools of classical economics, as represented especially by the genius of John Stuart Mill, who mastered the entire field by the age of 13, in 1819, but only wrote his masterpiece, *Principles of Political Economy*, in 1848.

- ✧ As public policy, it failed to deal effectively with the intensifying problems of industrial capitalism and eventually gave way to organized philanthropy in the private sector and more liberal policies in British government.
- ✧ As moral philosophy, it collapsed in the face of an enormous a terrible social and moral calamity—the Irish famine of 1845-1852.

Political economy matures.

Political economy cut its teeth on a series of economic crises in Great Britain. The first major collapse, in 1825-26, was comparable in severity to the crash of 1929. This was the depression that so exercised J.J. Gurney, which we mentioned earlier. Devastating and totally unexpected, the evangelical political economists seized on the event as an example of divine retribution. One radical journalist (William Cobbett) remarked: “Will the Quakers and Unitarians now venture to deny that there is a God?” meaning a retributive, evangelical God. Cobbett’s remark leads us to believe that most Quakers were not prepared to see the crash as divine retribution; even Gurney seems to have thought it more a test than a judgment.

More shocks followed the crash of ‘25, however, with severe recessions occurring in 1837, 1847-8, 1857 and 1866. The sheer regularity of these events called for a more rational explanation than divine wrath, namely over-investment, bubble formation and bubble collapse, in cycles. The evangelical Malthus had first defined—and predicted—economic collapses, but ascribed it to middle-class avarice outpacing the natural limits of consumer demand, over-extending itself in debt, and collapsing in bankruptcy. As the understanding of business cycles advanced with real experience, though, the moral argument for recessions began to lose its weight. Morality still figured, of course, but the mechanism was revealed as a *mechanism*, increasingly independent of causal moral factors that could be argued with rational sense or cured with moral condemnation.

The return of organized giving.

As the industrial revolution became an industrial regime, personalized individual, voluntary giving simply was not up to the job of taking care of the poor, whose ranks were swelling and whose plight was worsening. Organized giving came back with a moral vengeance in mid-century in Great Britain, becoming for the middle and upper classes a badge of moral probity and a requirement for social esteem in the mid-Victorian period. Friends provided tremendous leadership by example in the rise of philanthropy.

Moral philosophy.

The great Irish famine proved something of a turning point in the fortunes of evangelical political economics. As a set of ideas, it dominated public intellectual discourse and the minds of key government actors and policy makers. Its moral tome had been adopted by society as a whole in England. So, as the scale of the calamity in Ireland intensified, so did the rhetoric of divine visitation. Surely, the

hand of God was at work—but why? Some blamed the victims; they were Papists, after all, if not peasant pagan barbarians. Some blamed England’s grasping spirit. But the suffering eventually became so visibly overwhelming that it prompted a backlash of moral revulsion against the moralizers. As both human and national sympathies were awakened in England, so was a sense of outrage at the cold-hearted blamers, who were all pointing in different directions at a bewildering multitude of sins that seemed hardly up to the job of justifying such violent wrath from the Almighty.

More importantly, the laissez faire policies that the British government applied to the problem, from an explicitly evangelical worldview, made things worse. Even Chalmers admitted that this crisis was an exception and called for intervention. Chalmers died not long after. In the face of moral failure compounded by policy failure, and lacking Chalmers, its guiding light, evangelical political economics fell swiftly from favor.

Quakers, to their credit, were famously heroic in their response to the Irish crisis. They were working in Ireland already in numbers large enough to form a yearly meeting and had already been ministering to the poor of Ireland for generations. They laid no blame, gave abundantly from their hearts and their purses, made no conditions, abided no corruption in the administration of their relief, and they were fair.

One more factor turned the tide against evangelical political economy in mid-19th century—in a word, optimism. Evangelical political economy was, in its essence, pessimistic because the human battle against sin was a losing battle. One looked to the cross for victory, not to markets, the government or social programs. Eventually, those whose hopes rose on the new economy chose the optimism of the classical economists over the ineffectual moralizations of the evangelicals.

Science was taking off, and so was its brother, technology—solving problems, improving living conditions, promising and delivering on a new idea: progress. *The Origin of the Species* gave progressives the theory of social evolution, a framework for understanding progress. Quantum mechanics seemed to deepen the old Newtonian laws of physical determination with a new language of energy. Dr. John Snow proved that the horrible cholera epidemic of 1854 in London had scientifically definable causes, where the terrible cholera epidemic of 1830 had prompted the same kind of evangelical moralizing that had labeled the crash of ’25 a divine visitation.

In the late 1850s, two other events helped to redirect economics and Quaker culture during the second half of the century. In the economic sphere, the Limited Liability Act of 1855 allowed limited liability to companies of more than 25 members. This made large amounts of personal financial capital available to build large-scale industrial companies without needing charters from Parliament. The United States had always been more friendly to the idea of limited liability and it gained momentum from Jacksonian populism in 1830s, which saw it as a mark of

economic democracy. However, since corporate charters were regulated by the states, laws clarifying limited liability moved forward in a more haphazard fashion in the US than in the UK. By mid-century, however, the practice of limiting liability for shareholders was widespread.

Meanwhile, in 1859, John Stephenson Rowntree, then just 24, submitted *Quakerism Past and Present* as an essay submission for a prize offered to the Friend who could most effectively address the problem of Quaker decline. Within a year, London Yearly Meeting began revising its discipline along the lines he had suggested, ending, among other things, the practice of disowning members for marrying out of meeting and a host of other infractions. British Quakers were finally emerging from their quietist shell.

The New Poor Law stayed on the books for decades, however, and the basic assumption that the poor were responsible for their own plight remained unshaken until the Quaker Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree published his landmark book, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, in 1901.

Evangelicalism in America.

Things were somewhat different in America than in Great Britain. In the US, the evangelical movement lagged behind that of Great Britain in terms of when it really took hold. Moreover, Friends in America had never become the huge economic force that they had in England and had always been much more diverse in their economic pursuits and status. Many American Friends were still farmers through the 19th century and many were small business tradespeople. Philadelphia had its very rich Quakers and many of them turned evangelical, but the main current of evangelicalism flowed west among Friends of much more modest means. Also, because social welfare was the responsibility of the states, national public policy toward poor relief did not really take shape until the New Deal.

This diversity has made it much more difficult for me to follow all these trails to outline the history of Quakers and capitalism in the U.S. This is one of the areas in which I would hope other Quaker historians might fill in the gaps.